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TO ALL AMERICAN REPUBLIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS IMMEDIATE
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RUEHCR/AMEMBASSY BANJUL 0000
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0000
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 0000
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM 0000
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0000
RUDKHLQ/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI 0000
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0000
ALL NATO CAPITALS
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0000
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RUEHLGB/AMEMBASSY KIGALI 0000
RUFHPC/AMEMBASSY LOME 0000
RUTADE/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0000
RUMJPG/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0000
RUQMOG/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 0000
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0000
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RUTADS/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0000
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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGDV, PINR, XK
SUBJECT: CENTRAL AMERICAN UPDATE, NO. 3

1. THERE FOLLOWS THIRD IN OUR SERIES OF BIWEEKLY REPORTS
TO UPDATE POSTS ON DEVELOPMENTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA.
POSTS MAY USE UNCLASSIFIED AND LOU INFORMATION AS

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NON-PAPERS FOR HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION IS PRIMARILY FOR POSTS' BACKGROUND, BUT MAY BE USED SELECTIVELY IN BRIEFINGS.

EL SALVADOR: ELECTIONS

2.(LOU) DEBATE IS HEATING UP AS THE SALVADORAN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN MOVES INTO ITS FINAL WEEK, WITH MAJOR CONTENDERS VYING FOR THE LARGE UNDECIDED VOTER BLOC. THE LATEST (AND PERHAPS SOMEWHAT LESS THAN OBJECTIVE) PDC POLL SHOWS DUARTE WITH A HEALTHY LEAD OVER NEAREST RIVAL D'AUBUISSON, WITH THE PCN'S "CHACHI" GUERRERO HOLDING ON TO THIRD PLACE. PUBLIC INTEREST APPEARS TO BE AS HIGH AS IT WAS DURING THE 1982 ELECTIONS, WITH SOME REPORTS INDICATING OVER 80 OF THE ELECTORATE INTENDS TO VOTE.

3.(C) ACCORDING TO THE POLLS, THE PDC STILL FALLS SHORT OF THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY NEEDED TO WIN IN THE FIRST ROUND, HOWEVER. IT CONTINUES TO APPEAR THAT A RUN-OFF WILL BE NECESSARY IN LATE APRIL OR EARLY MAY BETWEEN THE TOP TWO CANDIDATES, MOST LIKELY DUARTE AND D'AUBUISSON, WITH GUERRERO OF THE PCN PARTY HOLDING A KEY BALANCE OF THE VOTES. WHILE THE PDC MAY BE ABLE TO WIN A RUN-OFF WITHOUT PCN SUPPORT, ARENA PROBABLY CANNOT. DUARTE HAS ACCUSED SEVERAL ARMY OFFICERS OF INTERFERING WITH THE PDC'S CAMPAIGN IN EASTERN EL SALVADOR, AND HAS RAISED HIS CONCERNS WITH THE MILITARY HIGH COMMAND, BUT THE MILITARY'S COMMITMENT TO REMAIN NEUTRAL AS AN INSTITUTION APPEARS FIRM.

4.(LOU) THE TOTAL NUMBER OF COUNTRIES SENDING OBSERVERS NOW STANDS AT MORE THAN 20, CONSIDERABLY MORE THAN IN 1982. ALL WESTERN HEMISPHERE COUNTRIES EXCEPT MEXICO, BRAZIL, NICARAGUA AND A FEW EASTERN CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES HAVE AGREED TO SEND OFFICIAL OBSERVERS TO THE ELECTIONS. ON THE EUROPEAN SIDE, THE BRITISH, DUTCH, WEST GERMANS, ITALIANS, AND BELGIANS HAVE ACCEPTED THE OBSERVER INVITATION; NORWAY, AUSTRIA, AND JAPAN WILL HAVE OFFICIALS IN EL SALVADOR DURING THE ELECTIONS, BUT HAVE NOT DESIGNATED THEIR REPRESENTATIVES AS OFFICIAL OBSERVERS. A LARGE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL OBSERVERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (OAS, CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC INTERNATIONAL, ETC.) WILL ALSO BE PRESENT.

5.(U) DESPITE THEIR PROMISES TO THE CONTRARY, THE GUERRILLAS CONTINUE THEIR ATTEMPTS TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF TERROR SURROUNDING THE ELECTIONS. THREE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY HAVE BEEN ASSASSINATED SINCE JANUARY, WITH THE GUERRILLAS CLAIMING TWO OF THE MURDERS AS A "RESPONSE" TO THE ELECTIONS. ON MARCH 15, A RETIRED ARMY COLONEL AND PAISA PARTY ACTIVIST WAS ASSASSINATED; FIFTEEN DAYS BEFORE ANOTHER RETIRED COLONEL AND MILITARY JUDGE WAS ALSO SHOT AND KILLED. THESE LEFT-WING DEATH SQUAD ASSASSINATIONS, ALTHOUGH PROBABLY PERPETRATED BY THE CLARA ELIZABETH RAMIREZ METROPOLITAN FRONT (CERF), ALLEGEDLY A BREAKAWAY GROUP FROM THE FPL GUERRILLA ORGANIZATION, HAVE ALSO BEEN HAILED BY THE FMLN UMBRELLA GUERRILLA GROUP'S RADIO VENCEREMOS AS "EXECUTIONS" RESULTING FROM "THE PEOPLE'S REPUDIATION" OF THE SALVADORAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. INDEED, THERE IS STRONG INFERENTIAL EVIDENCE OF A "RECONCILIATION" BETWEEN THE CERF AND THE FMLN.

6.(U) THESE MURDERS BY FAR LEFT GROUPS STAND OUT ALL THE MORE GIVEN THE OVERALL DECLINE IN CIVILIAN DEATHS. FEBRUARY 1984 SAW 68 PRESS REPORTED DEATHS, THE LOWEST LEVEL SINCE OUR EMBASSY BEGAN KEEPING RECORDS IN OCTOBER

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1980. THE GUERRILLAS HAVE ALSO THREATENED REPRISALS AGAINST VILLAGERS WHO ENGAGE IN ELECTORAL ACTIVITY AND IN RECENT DAYS HAVE BEGUN A CAMPAIGN OF TERROR WITHIN THE CAPITAL CITY, SETTING OFF BOMBS, BURNING BUSES AND DESTROYING GAS STATIONS. ON MARCH 6, THE GUERRILLAS ATTACKED A CLEARLY MARKED RED CROSS AMBULANCE, KILLING TWO RED CROSS WORKERS. ON MARCH 18, THE GUERRILLAS STOPPED HIGHWAY TRAVELERS TO SEIZE THEIR VOTER CARDS IN AN EFFORT TO REDUCE THE ELECTIONS TURNOUT.

EL SALVADOR: LABOR UNREST

7.(C) A RECENT WAVE OF LABOR UNREST IN SAN SALVADOR APPEARS TO BE PART OF A BROADER, LONG-TERM INSURGENT PLAN TO REBUILD A POPULAR URBAN BASE OF SUPPORT, WHILE CREATING MAXIMUM DISORDER AND FORCING A SHOW OF STRENGTH IN THE CITY IN THE CRITICAL PRE-ELECTIONS PERIOD. SINCE LATE 1982, AFTER THEIR FAILURE TO MOBILIZE A GENERAL STRIKE OF PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES, THE GUERRILLA LEADERSHIP HAS WORKED HARD TO LINK UP AGAIN WITH LEFTIST LABOR SYMPATHIZERS IN THE URBAN AREAS, AND RELIABLE SOURCES HAVE CONFIRMED THAT PUBLIC SECTOR JOB ACTIONS AND STRIKES THAT HAVE PLAGUED SAN SALVADOR SINCE MID-FEBRUARY ARE BEING MANIPULATED BY TWO EXTREME LEFT LABOR FEDERATIONS. FACING ELECTIONS, THE POLITICAL PARTIES WERE UNABLE TO AGREE ON EXTENDING THE WAGE AND PRICE FREEZE WHICH EXPIRED IN DECEMBER, AND THE ABSENCE OF A CURRENT WAGE FREEZE DECREE IS STIMULATING THE ECONOMIC EXPECTATIONS OF WORKERS AND PROVIDING THE LEFTISTS WITH A HANDLE TO FOSTER STRIKES. WHILE THE BASIC LEFTIST PLAN SHOWS SIGNS OF CAREFUL IMPLEMENTATION AND SOME ELEMENTS OF THE GOES ARMED FORCES ARE GROWING IMPATIENT WITH THE LABOR UNREST, THE GOVERNMENT HAS SO FAR BEEN ABLE TO CONTROL THE SITUATION WITHOUT ARMED FORCES INTERVENTION AND HAS FORESTALLED THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GENERAL STRIKE OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES.

8.(C) LABOR ITSELF IS DIVIDED ON HOW BEST TO PROCEED. THE CTS, A CONFEDERATION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATIONS AFFILIATED WITH THE AFL-CIO SUPPORTED UPD, HAS ANNOUNCED A WORK STOPPAGE OF PUBLIC WORKS, AGRICULTURE AND TOURISM WORKERS WHICH ITS LEADERS HOPE WILL INSPIRE SIMILAR WORK STOPPAGES BY OTHER PUBLIC EMPLOYEE GROUPS. HOWEVER, FULL UPD SUPPORT FOR THE CTS STRIKES IS UNLIKELY, AND SAMUEL MALDONADO, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UCS, A UPD MEMBER UNION, FEELS THAT THE CTS'S TIMING IS BAD AND WILL ONLY GIVE CREDENCE TO CHARGES BY RIGHTISTS OF MODERATE LABOR COMPLICITY WITH THE LEFTIST LED LABOR FRONT.

ELECTIONS: NICARAGUA

9.(U) THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION HAS WITHDRAWN FROM THE COUNCIL OF STATE'S DISCUSSION OF THE DRAFT ELECTORAL LAW, PROTESTING THE FSLN'S UNWILLINGNESS TO INCORPORATE THEIR VIEWS IN MAJOR PROVISIONS OF THE LAW. SEVERAL NON-FSLN GROUPS REMAIN IN THE COUNCIL, INCLUDING THE TWO COMMUNIST PARTIES AND THEIR RESPECTIVE LABOR ARMS, AND TWO LEFTIST DEMOCRATIC PARTIES. COUNCIL SECRETARY RAFAEL SOLIS DOWNPLAYED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WALKOUT, SAYING THE "RIGHTIST" PARTIES WERE AFRAID TO FACE THE FSLN IN A FAIR ELECTION.

10.(C) THE WALKOUT HAS ENABLED THE COUNCIL TO RACE THROUGH MOST OF THE REMAINING ARTICLES IN THE LAW, BUT DEBATE HAS STILL BOGGED DOWN ON VARIOUS SENSITIVE ISSUES, SUCH AS ACCESS TO THE MEDIA AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTING SEATS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WHICH TOUCH ON VITAL INTERESTS OF THE NON-FSLN ORGANIZATIONS STILL PARTICIPATING IN THE DISCUSSION. ON MARCH 12, THE FSLN

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PRESENTED ITS NEW PROPOSALS ON MEDIA ACCESS, WHICH WOULD HAVE PROVIDED THE PARTIES A DAILY QUOTA OF AIR TIME -- TO BE SHARED BY ALL -- OF 15 MINUTES PER DAY ON EACH OF NICARAGUA'S TWO TELEVISION STATIONS AND 30 MINUTES PER WEEK ON EACH OF THE STATE-CONTROLLED RADIO STATIONS. WHEN THE NON-FSLN ORGANIZATIONS REMAIN DISSATISFIED, THE DEBATE WAS DISCONTINUED TO ALLOW THEM TIME TO FORMULATE CONCRETE COUNTERPROPOSALS. AFTER A SIMILARLY HARSH DEBATE, THE FSLN ALSO AGREED TO REVISE ITS PROPOSAL FOR AWARDED SEATS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO ALLOW FOR GREATER OPPORTUNITY FOR REPRESENTATION OF THE SMALLER PARTIES.

11.(C) THE COUNCIL HAS ALSO AGREED ON THE ARTICLE ON PUBLIC FINANCING. AS APPROVED, THE LAW PROVIDES THAT THE STATE WILL AWARD EACH PARTY OR ALLIANCE UP TO 6 MILLION CORDOBAS (ONE US DOLLAR: 10 CORDOBAS AT THE OFFICIAL RATE.) FOR THE CAMPAIGN. PARTIES MAY ALSO RECEIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM ABROAD, BUT MUST INFORM THE CENTRAL BANK OF RECEIPTS. THE COUNCIL ALSO DECIDED TO ENFRANCHISE THE MILITARY, BUT, TO DEFLECT CHARGES THAT THE FSLN WAS ABUSING ITS CONTROL OVER THE MILITARY, APPROVED ARTICLES WHICH BANNED ACTIVE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES, INCLUDING THE MINISTERS OF DEFENSE AND INTERIOR, FROM PROSELYTIZING OR RUNNING FOR OFFICE. THIS MOVE MAY BE A MANEUVER BY THE ORTEGA FACTION TO PUSH INTERIOR MINISTER BERGE OUT OF THE ELECTORAL LIMELIGHT.

12. (LOU) THE NICARAGUAN GOVERNMENT HAS BARRED LEADERS OF THE ARMED OPPOSITION FROM RUNNING FOR OFFICE AND ALSO IS MOVING TO PROSECUTE AND CONVICT THEM IN ABSENTIA, IN AN ATTEMPT TO PORTRAY THE OPPOSITION AS COMMON CRIMINALS, NOT POLITICAL DISSIDENTS WITH WHOM DIALOGUE OR COMPROMISE MIGHT BE DESIRABLE. ACCORDING TO A MARCH 9 PRESS REPORT, 22 OPPOSITION LEADERS HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH CRIMES RANGING FROM ASSAULT TO ASSASSINATION AND WILL BE SUMMONED TO COURT IN NICARAGUA. THE PURPOSE OF THE TRIALS IS TO FORECLOSE THE ARMED OPPOSITIONS' PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTIONS, PARTICULARLY THE CANDIDACY OF SUCH CHARISMATIC LEADERS AS EDEN PASTORA WHO ENJOY WIDE NAME RECOGNITION IN NICARAGUA.

13.(C) BISHOP PABLO ANTONIO VEGA, PRESIDENT OF THE NICARAGUAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE, HAS TOLD US THAT THE CONFERENCE WILL ISSUE A PASTORAL LETTER ON THE ELECTIONS IN LATE MARCH. THE BISHOP SAID THAT IT WAS THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH TO PROVIDE THE FAITHFUL A "PERSPECTIVE: FROM WHICH IT COULD JUDGE THE ELECTIONS. WHILE THE CHURCH COULD NOT SUPPORT ANY SINGLE PARTY OR CANDIDATE, IT COULD DEMAND THAT THE ELECTIONS OFFER A REAL ALTERNATIVE. IN VEGA'S OPINION, THE ELECTIONS PLANNED BY THE FSLN DO NOT OFFER A REAL CHOICE, BUT ARE DESIGNED TO LEGITIMATE THE SANDINISTAS' HOLD ON POWER.

GUATEMALA: PEACE COMMISSION FORMED

14.(U) CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL MEJIA HAS PROMISED HIS GOVERNMENT'S FULL COOPERATION IN THE FORMATION AND ACTIVITIES OF A NATIONAL PEACE COMMISSION PROPOSED BY THE RECTOR OF GUATEMALA'S SAN CARLOS UNIVERSITY. THE COMMISSION, WHOSE MANDATE WILL BE TO PROMOTE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION THROUGH DIALOGUE LEADING TO FULL PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS, WILL INCLUDE PARTICIPANTS FROM THE BUSINESS SECTOR, LABOR UNIONS, INDIANS, PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES, AND THE PRESS, AS WELL AS TWO CABINET MINISTERS AND AN ARMY OFFICER.

CONTADORA

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15.(U) THE THREE WORKING COMMISSIONS ON POLITICAL, SECURITY, AND ECONOMIC ISSUES, ESTABLISHED BY THE JANUARY 8 RESOLUTION OF PRINCIPLES, CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS TO TRANSLATE THE 21-POINT DOCUMENT OF OBJECTIVES INTO A COMPREHENSIVE, VERIFIABLE TREATY. THE COMMISSIONS WILL HAVE EXTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS THROUGHOUT APRIL TO MEET THE APRIL 30 DEADLINE FOR PRESENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE FOREIGN MINISTERS.

16.(LOU) TO ASSIST OUR FRIENDS IN DEVELOPING A TREATY THAT FULLY IMPLEMENTS THE DOCUMENT OF OBJECTIVES, AN INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON CONTADORA, HAS ESTABLISHED THREE SUB-GROUPS TO PARALLEL THE THREE WORKING COMMISSIONS. THE SUBGROUP ON SECURITY ISSUES RECENTLY TRAVELED TO THE REGION TO DISCUSS DIFFICULT, TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE SECURITY OBJECTIVES. ISSUES INCLUDING MEANS OF INVENTORYING ARMS AND TROOP LEVELS, ELIMINATION OF FOREIGN SECURITY ADVISERS, AND VERIFICATION OF SECURITY PROVISIONS.

STATUS OF LEGISLATION ON CENTRAL AMERICA

17.(LOU) ON MARCH 14 THE SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE AN ADMINISTRATION REQUEST FOR 93 MILLION DOLLARS IN SUPPLEMENTAL FY-1984 MILITARY AID FOR EL SALVADOR, AFTER DEFEATING BY 16-13 A PROCEDURAL AMENDMENT OFFERED BY SENATOR INOUE THAT WOULD HAVE DEFERRED CONSIDERATION OF THE EL SALVADOR AMENDMENT. THE SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDS WERE ATTACHED AS AN AMENDMENT TO A BILL PROVIDING 150 MILLION DOLLARS IN EMERGENCY FOOD AID FOR AFRICA WHICH HAD PASSED THE HOUSE EARLIER. ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS EXPLAINED THEY HAD USED THIS PROCEDURE SINCE THE FY-84 MILITARY AID REQUEST FOR EL SALVADOR WAS SERIOUSLY UNDERFUNDED IN THE SECOND CONTINUING RESOLUTION OF NOVEMBER 1983 AND BECAUSE THERE IS URGENT NEED FOR THE REQUESTED MILITARY AID IN EL SALVADOR TO HELP ASSURE THE SECURITY OF THE ELECTIONS AND OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT TO BE INAUGURATED JUNE 1.

18.(LOU) ON MARCH 15 THE FULL SENATE APPROVED AN AMENDMENT OFFERED BY SENATOR DANFORTH TO THE LOW-INCOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE BILL TO ADD ON 90 MILLION DOLLARS IN EMERGENCY FOOD AID FOR AFRICA. THIS ACTION, TAKEN BY VOICE VOTE, STRIPPED THE AFRICA FOOD AID BILL, WITH ITS EL SALVADOR AMENDMENT INCLUDED, OF MOST OF THE FOOD AID COMPONENT, LEAVING THE BILL MAINLY AN EL SALVADOR EMERGENCY AID MEASURE WITH VARIOUS OTHER CONTROVERSIAL AMENDMENTS INCLUDED.

19.(LOU) CENTRAL AMERICAN INITIATIVE: AFTER EXTENDED DEBATE AMONG THE DEMOCRATS ON THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE ON MARCH 14 VOTED TO SPLIT OFF THE CENTRAL AMERICA PORTION OF THE FY84 SUPPLEMENTAL / FY85 FOREIGN AID BILL AND REPORT OUT TWO SEPARATE BILLS.

A WORLDWIDE FOREIGN AID AUTHORIZATION BILL, EXCLUDING CENTRAL AMERICA, WAS REPORTED OUT ON MARCH 15. ACTION ON THE COMMITTEE'S VERSION OF A CENTRAL AMERICA AID BILL -- WHICH COULD BE CLOSE TO THE TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE DRAFT OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE SUBCOMMITTEE -- WAS DEFERRED UNTIL AFTER THE MARCH 25 ELECTIONS IN EL SALVADOR.

20.(LOU) FUTURE ACTION: AS NOTED ABOVE, THE EL SALVADOR EMERGENCY AID REQUEST IS EXPECTED TO REACH THE SENATE FLOOR SOMETIME THIS WEEK. THE HELMS SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE WILL HOLD HEARINGS ON THE CENTRAL AMERICA INITIATIVE ON MARCH 20. THE FULL FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE WILL BEGIN ITS MARK-UP OF THE

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WORLDWIDE FOREIGN AID BILL, OF WHICH THE CENTRAL AMERICA
PACKAGE IS A PART, A WEEK LATER ON MARCH 27. HOUSE
FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FASCELL HAS NOT
INDICATED WHEN THE COMMITTEE WILL CONSIDER THE CENTRAL
AMERICA AID BILL, NOR HAS THE HOUSE LEADERSHIP YET
SCHEDULED FLOOR ACTION ON THE WORLDWIDE BILL (EXCLUDING
CENTRAL AMERICA). SHULTZ
END OF MESSAGE

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